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SOC 1051

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University of New Orleans

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Fall 2015 UNO

**Introductory Sociology
SOC 1051 Section 002**

**12-12:50 MWF
MH 179**

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Office Hours: MWF 11-11:45; 1-1:45; 3-3:30 and by appointment

Course Overview:

This course will introduce you to foundational concepts within sociology, with the goal of helping you to understand the core purpose of the discipline. In doing so, you will leave with an understanding of what sociology has to offer in terms of answering questions about human behavior, identity, and social problems.

In Unit I we will define key terms such as social institutions, culture, socialization and modernity, explore the origins of sociology, and learn its basic assumptions and research approaches. Most generally, the goal of the first unit will be to learn the key features of sociology itself, to begin to understand what it means to think from a sociological perspective.

Unit II will focus on an in-depth study of culture and identity. Our goal will be to explore a sociological definition of culture, focusing on concepts such as representation, social constructionism, and knowledge as a social practice. We will examine gender and race as identities that are socially created in the context of society. In doing so, our attention will also be drawn to issues of power and inequality, both historically and today.

The final unit – Unit III – will emphasize questions of power and inequality in the U.S. and around the world today. The focus will be on understanding inequality as a *structural* issue, to challenge the individualism that pervades the dominant, ‘common sense’ conceptualization of issues of inequality that circulates in the U.S. and many places around the world.

While my aim is to offer you a broad introduction to the field of sociology, naturally my viewpoint has shaped how I have organized this course. I am a cultural sociologist and study issues of identity and inequality. Just so you know, we *won't* spend a lot of time this semester learning descriptive ‘facts’ about what society is. Instead we will begin to acquire tools generated within the discipline of sociology for critically analyzing how society operates. The goal is to help you grasp the sociological perspective, and understand how it is different from other ways of explaining human behavior, identity, and social problems, as well as how it offers a specific perspective on the operation of power in society. In doing so, the course is organized so that you can see how sociological thought differs from other ways of thought, including biological explanations (Unit II) and psychological/individualistic explanations (Unit III) for our everyday experiences in the world.

Course Objectives: After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Define basic concepts within sociology, such as: society, culture, socialization, social institutions, the sociological imagination, social constructionism, modernity, colonialism and imperialism.
- 2) Explain the historical conditions for the rise of sociology and recognize key features of its history in the United States.
- 3) Recognize the names of many important sociological thinkers and central themes of their major works.
- 4) Identify common methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives in sociology and how these can be applied to studying social issues.
- 5) Understand how inequality operates through structures of race, class, gender, and other categories of identity.
- 6) Explain how sociology and the sociological perspective allow a unique approach for viewing human behavior, identity, and social problems, particularly inequality and the operation of power on a national and global level.

Course Format:

This course will primarily be structured around daily lectures intended to clarify and contextualize the assigned reading materials and topics for the day. Our class meetings will be broken up with films and other audiovisual materials as well as small discussion groups.

During lectures I openly invite people to ask questions, especially if a concept I am explaining is unclear. Also, please feel free to stop me if I am moving too quickly through a lecture. And if you have something to contribute, please do so. Keep in mind that you're here to learn something, so I welcome you taking an active role in your education.

Course Texts:

There are no required textbooks for you to purchase for this course. **However, you still have required reading and viewing materials available on Moodle.** These consist of academic articles, news articles, blog posts, video clips, etc. All required reading/viewing materials are noted on the course schedule and must be completed before coming to lecture. *Your success in the class depends on you completing the required readings. You will have regular reading quizzes intended to help you keep on top of these requirements.*

Additionally, all materials that I use in class – including PP slides, audio-visual clips, movie links, etc. – will be available on Moodle following each class period.

I highly recommend that you review the PowerPoints covering the previous class meeting before attending the next class meeting, and update and revise your own class notes accordingly. But even if you don't follow this advice, these documents will be available to you when you study for exams. It's important to remember that they are not an adequate substitute for strong note-taking. Therefore, it is essential that you come to class regularly, focus your attention, and take strong notes for yourself.

Organization of Moodle Course Site:

Our Moodle course site is organized by weekly modules that mirror the syllabus construction for ease of navigation. At the top of the Moodle site is a module entitled “Introductory Sociology Home,” where you will find the syllabus and if applicable, any other important course documents.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Grading Scale: You will be graded on a 10-point scale.

A: 90-100% B: 80-89% C: 70-79% D: 60-69% F: Everything below 60%

There are a total of 400 possible points for this course.

You will be required to take three exams. Exam dates are noted on the course schedule and are subject to change. All exams will consist of multiple choice questions that will be pulled from the reading materials *and* from the daily in-class lectures. Before each exam we will have a full in-class review session. For the exams you will need to bring a scantron sheet and a number 2 pencil. Scantrons can be bought at the bookstore.

1. Exam I (100 points) 25%

2. Exam II (100 points) 25%

3. Exam III (100 points) 25%

4. Moodle Reading Quizzes 50 points 12.5%

As a system to help you keep up with scheduled readings, we will have regular (almost weekly) reading quizzes administered on Moodle beginning in Week 2. These quizzes will test you using a multiple choice format. The quizzes are intended to be simple reading comprehension assessments and therefore should be completed once you have finished the assigned readings.

There will be, on average, two reading questions per week (**25 total, 2 pts each**) and these will be posted in the weekly module on Moodle. You will have until midnight on Friday of each week to complete the reading questions for the previous week. After this time the quiz will close and you will not have an opportunity to make up the quiz. Keep in mind that the purpose of the reading quizzes is to provide a structure to help you keep up with the assigned readings.

5. Small Group Discussions (50 points; 10 points each) 12.5%

Five times during the semester we will break into small groups for discussion exercises. In these groups, you will be responsible for discussing a reading, a film, topic, etc., guided by specific questions I provide to you. After the discussion groups meet, we will come back together in a large group to explore your findings and synthesize the key ideas. One person from each group will write up the group’s responses and give them to me; this person (or persons) will be awarded up to two bonus points for writing up the conclusions, depending on the quality of the write-up.

Your discussion grade will be based on your group write-ups. If you miss class on a day when we have a discussion group (these are noted on the course schedule, and I will remind you ahead of time), you are responsible for completing the discussion questions on your own and submitting a *hard copy* of your responses to me within one week of the original discussion exercise date.

Attendance Policy and Effect on Grade:

Attendance is required. Lectures are important, and it is essential to the learning process that you be present and actively listening in order to succeed in the class.

If you cannot attend class for some reason, you are still responsible for understanding the material covered in class that day.

I will pass around a sign-up sheet at the beginning of each class. Each student is expected to initial this sheet in order to be counted as present for that class period.

YOU ARE ALLOWED **FOUR** ABSENCES DURING THE SEMESTER WITHOUT PENALTY. EACH ABSENCE BEYOND THAT WILL RESULT IN A FIVE-POINT DEDUCTION FROM YOUR OVERALL COURSE GRADE. For example, if you have six absences overall, four of those absences will not be penalized. For the other two absences, 10 points (5 points for each absence) will be deducted from your total course grade. Therefore, if you end the semester with a raw score of 320/400, but miss six classes, you would actually end up with a 310/400. This change would bring your score from a B (80%) to a C (78%).

Please note: You are responsible for keeping track of your attendance. If you experience circumstances beyond your control which result in you missing a great deal of class (e.g., illness, family emergency, etc.), please contact me personally to discuss your situation. However, **it is *not* necessary to email me every time you miss lecture, especially if you are not concerned about excessive absences.** An overview of the content covered each day can be found on the course schedule and in the PP notes posted on Moodle. If there are changes to the course schedule, I will make a note of these on the electronic version of the syllabus on Moodle and alert the class to any changes over email.

Make-Up Exams:

Make-up exams are only given with **prior** permission from me and with a valid medical (or comparable) excuse. All make-up exams must be taken within one week of the original exam date and will be administered in my office. **If you do not make up the exam within one week of the original exam date, you will receive a score of zero.**

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be reported to administration. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, turning in 'recycled' papers/assignments, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of

academic dishonesty. For a full discussion of academic integrity, see the UNO Student Handbook:
<http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu/studentpolicies/policymanual/academicdishonesty.cfm>

Students are encouraged to work with others to master the material in this course. However, all work that is graded is expected to be your own work.

If I catch you cheating on an exam you will immediately receive a score of zero and I will report the incident to administration.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with documented disabilities can seek a variety of accommodations. If you have a disability, you must register with the Office for Disability Services and they will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations. Further information is available at:
http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu/studentpolicies/policymanual/disabilities_policy.cfm

If you need accommodations from your instructor please discuss these with her at the beginning of the semester and include appropriate documentation from Disability Services.

General Classroom Guidelines:

You are only in the classroom for 50 minutes, three times a week. I ask for your focused attention during this short period. Come prepared to listen, take notes, ask questions, and learn something. I will put forth my very best effort to ensure that you learn this material, and I have the highest expectations for you.

Expectations:

1. Please be on time to class and remain in the classroom until I have indicated that the lecture is complete.
2. Put phones away, sound off, as soon as you arrive. Also remove any other unnecessary devices/materials from your desk. If you want to take notes on a computer or tablet, please see me for individual approval. Otherwise all you will need during a regular lecture is a notebook and a pen/pencil.
3. Refrain from non-classroom related activities, such as: talking to others, texting, posting on Facebook, or playing video games on your computer/phone. The college classroom is not a space for leisure activities, and it is more likely that you will enjoy your time here if you make the effort to focus.
4. Respect others in the classroom. We don't always agree with one another, but in order for us to have a productive learning environment, everyone needs to feel free to express his/her own opinions and viewpoints.

Communication and Moodle Access:

At times I will communicate with you through your UNO email accounts. Please ensure that you regularly access your UNO email or forward your UNO mail to the address you most commonly use.

Because so much of our course content is on Moodle, I expect you to regularly (at least once a week) access the course through this site. **IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE ACCESSING MOODLE OR ARE CONFUSED ABOUT HOW IT WORKS, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO RAISE QUESTIONS.**

A Note about Grades, Extra Credit, Etc.:

In general, students do well in this class if they do their work, come to class, and study for their exams. The material is usually not challenging for students who keep up with their responsibilities, and I try my best to present the material in a way that is clear, organized, and produces the least confusion. I also am aware of my own role in the outcome of grades, and give some wiggle room in considering that we are all human and make mistakes – in other words, I am reasonably flexible with curves, recognizing difficult test questions, etc.

With all of that said, I do not offer an extra credit option up front for this class. However, if after the second exam you are struggling or unhappy with your grade I am open to hearing your points of view.

I honestly believe that everyone in this class can make the grade he/she wants to make by just doing the assigned work, and my concern is that an extra credit option sometimes misdirects your focus as a student. I challenge you to make the effort from the very start of the class – and promise that it will make your life less difficult if you do so.

Strategies for Success

1) Come to class regularly. While in class, be an active listener and take notes. Because the PowerPoint slides will be posted on Moodle, you do not have to concern yourself with hurriedly copying every word on the slide. Instead, work on being an active listener, staying in the moment, and taking notes in a way that allows you to develop a rough outline of key concepts and ideas and highlight notable examples or points that really stick out to you. Remember: note-taking is about *synthesizing* ideas in order to learn from the process – if you get into the habit of mindlessly copying stuff, you'll lose your focus and not get much out of your time in the classroom.

2) Follow the reading schedule and complete all required readings before coming class. Review the notes for the previous lecture before coming to the next lecture. Doing so will help keep you on track with the overarching themes of the course and help you develop stronger note-taking skills.

If you follow these recommendations, when it comes time for the exams, you will find that studying will not prove to be too overwhelming.

Course Schedule and Readings:

On the course schedule below the readings for each class meeting are noted under the date/theme for each class period. Please do your readings BEFORE coming to class so that you are prepared for lecture.

Note that this schedule is subject to change. If there are any changes these will be announced in class as well as in an email sent to your UNO email account. You can always find the most recently updated version of the syllabus on Moodle.

Unit I The Sociological Perspective

Week 1 Introduction to the Course

Wednesday, August 19: Introductions and Syllabus Review

Friday, August 21: Sociology, Society, and Social Institutions

Read: “10 Things Not Enough Kids Know Before Going to College”

Begin Reading: Macionis, excerpt from *Society: The Basics*

Week 2 Introducing the Sociological Perspective

Monday, August 24: The Sociological Perspective

Finish Reading: Macionis, excerpt from *Society: The Basics*

Wednesday, August 26: Culture

Read: du Gay et. all, excerpt from *Doing Cultural Studies*

Friday, August 28: Culture and Socialization

Read: Davis, “Final Notes on a Case of Extreme Isolation”

Week 3 Modern Society

Monday, August 31: Discussion Exercise #1

Watch in class: First 16 minutes of *The Gods Must Be Crazy*

Wednesday, September 2: Modern Society

Friday, September 4: European Modernity and Founding Fathers

Read: Ballantin et. all, “The Development of Sociology”

Week 4 History of Sociology

Monday, September 7: NO CLASS – Labor Day Holiday

Wednesday, September 9: Founding Fathers Continued

Read: Ritzer, “The Giants of Classical Sociological Theory”

Friday, September 11: Early U.S. Sociology and Classical Frameworks of Thought

Read: “American Sociology”

Week 5 Sociological Research

Monday, September 14: Research Methods

Read: “Conducting Research”

Wednesday, September: 16: Research Methods Continued

Friday, September 18: Review for Exam I

Unit II Culture and Identity

Week 6 Introduction to Unit II

Monday, September 21: Exam I

Wednesday, September 23: Discussion Exercise #2

Read: Miner, "The Body Ritual of the Nacirema"

Friday, September 25: The Importance of Studying Culture/Introduction to Unit II

Week 7 Representation

Monday, September 28: Review Exam I Results

Wednesday, September 30: Language and Representation

Read: Stuart Hall, pp. 1-15 **ONLY** from *Representation*

Friday, October 2: Semiotics and Cultural Imagery

Read: Stuart Hall, pp. 16-24 **ONLY** from *Representation*

Week 8 The Social Construction of Identity

Monday, October 5: Gender

Read: Coltrane, excerpt from *Gender and Families*

Wednesday, October 7: Race and Its History

Read: Lopez, "The Social Construction of Race"

Friday, October 9: The Body as a Text

Read: Patricia Hill Collins, "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images" (pp. 76-86 **ONLY**)

Week 9 Representation and Identity

Monday, October 12: In-Class Exercise #3 – Reading Cultural Images

Wednesday, October 14: Social Institutions and Powerful Cultural Imagery

Read: Patricia Hill Collins, "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images" (pp. 86-97 **ONLY**)

Friday, October 16: NO CLASS - Fall Break

Week 10 Formal Knowledge and Social Power

Monday, October 19: Science and Race

Read: Guillamin, "Race and Nature: The System of Marks"

Wednesday, October 21: Race: The Floating Signifier (Stuart Hall)

Friday, October 23: Review for Exam II

Unit III Thinking Structurally (Power and Inequality)

Week 11 Exam II

Monday, October 26: Exam II

Wednesday, October 28: Discussion Exercise #4

Read: C. Wright Mills, "The Promise"

Friday, October 30: Introduction to Unit III/Review Discussion Exercise #4

Week 12 Economic and Class Analysis

Monday, November 2: Review Exam II Results

Wednesday, November 4: The Class System in the U.S.

Read: “Why Do Poor People ‘Waste’ Money on Luxury Goods?”

Friday, November 6: Marxism 101

Read: Shelden, “The Capitalist Economic System” (pp. 264-269)

Week 13 Systems of Power/Inequality

Monday, November 9: Recent History of U.S. Economy/Political Economy

Read: Shelden, “The Capitalist Economic System” (pp 269-273)

Wednesday, November 11: Patriarchy and Sexism

Read: Johnson, “Patriarchy: A System”

Friday, November 13: Institutional Racism

Read: Lipsitz, “The Possessive Investment in Whiteness”

Week 14 Seeing the Macro in the Micro

Monday, November 16: Discussion Exercise #5

Read: McIntosh, “Unpacking the Invisible Backpack of White Privilege”

Wednesday, November 18: Intersectionality

Read: “Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person”

Friday, November 20: Neocolonialism and Global Inequality

Read: “Our Policies, Their Consequences”

Week 15 Globalization and Global Inequalities

Monday, November 23: *Maquilapolis* viewing

Wednesday, November 25: Finish watching *Maquilapolis*

Friday, November 27: NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 16 Course Wrap-Up

Monday, November: The Danger of a Single Story/Unit III Overview

Wednesday, December 2: Review for Exam III/Course Wrap-Up

Friday, December 4: Exam III